

September 2020 Pastoral Message

Roman 12:9-13 – “Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.”

Grace and peace be with you, my beloved family, and friends.

I was recently at my doctor’s office waiting in this cramped room and was looking around. As I gazed out the window and around me, I obviously noticed how our world has changed in the last months: people walked and sat by physically distancing themselves from one another, masks were covering faces, and there was even a nurse at the door checking temperatures, asking the questions about travel and overall health, and sanitization stations for hands so germs would be instantly vanquished. And I began to think...is this our new normal?

Unfortunately, I believe it is and I do not see this new normal changing anytime soon. We have heard that the COVID-19 virus has now entered into Sibley County, so it is no longer geographically other people’s problem...it is real, and it is here. And yes, that concerns me. However, I think each of our congregations in the parish is doing the best we can to clean up, worship by adapting to some new changes, and joining together again as church families on Sunday mornings. And this makes me happy, it really does.

As I look out among the congregations during worship, I so greatly appreciate those that are in attendance seeking to have their spiritual cups renewed each week and worship the Triune God. Those who are not in attendance, I am doing my part as well as bringing God’s word to them, and sharing with them the Lord’s Supper, especially for those whom I have not seen for many months; and that makes me happy too.

September is here. School begins soon enough, harvest is right around the corner, and slowly the temperature will change to cooler nights and mornings which I look forward to. I chose this month’s scripture passage as a remembrance of what the Apostle Paul was trying to get at with the Roman Jews and Gentiles far from him. He was reminding them of how we are supposed to act with one another, and our God, and continue to keep Jesus Christ in our hearts, our minds, and our souls.

Though we are in a real time of distress, and question what is going to happen next, that does not excuse us from keeping loving and serving our neighbors both near and far. Even in suffering, we are called to be patient and let God continue to be in the drivers seat. Remember the Lord Christ in all that you do and let His example of love, forgiveness, and grace be imprinted on your hearts. God is love and that brings us back to where we need to be as faithful Christians. And do not forget to pray – conversations with God free us from anxiety, remind us of who we are and what we are called to be as God’s committed people.

So I welcome you to September and the new normal which we are getting used to. Please stay vigilant when you leave your homes. Wear your masks. Sanitize as often as possible. Keep your distance from those who you meet and greet outside of your homes. And continue to do what you are doing in church on Sunday mornings. I love and care for all of you and am so proud of you for that which you do in serving God, and one another. And I look forward to seeing you each week as we offer up our thanks and praise to the one who gave himself for us.

Peace be with you and I will see you in worship.

Rev. Erik Karlson

Pastor, Neighbors in Christ Parish